

New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1944

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Week of October 2, 1944

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NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

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1944 PRODUCTIONS

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THEATRE OPENINGS

"Last Stop"
"Star Time"
"Down to Miami"
"The Day Will Come"
"While the Sun Shines"

Complete reviews appear in this issue

"While the Sun Shines"

Comedy by Terence Rattigan; staged by George S. Kaufmann; settings by Edward Gilbert. Presented by Max Gordon at the Lyceum Theatre, September 19, 1944.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
September 20, 1944

Funny First Act Just Too Good For Balance Of 'While Sun Shines'

By JOHN CHAPMAN

THERE is no more deftly and delightfully funny first act in town than the opening stanza of "While the Sun Shines." It is so good, so amiably played that the following two acts can't measure up to it, and one leaves the Lyceum Theatre with a regrettable sense of disappointment.

The latter two-thirds of the comedy is by no means bad, but it becomes stretched-out—and when very, very British comedy becomes stretched-out it is quite likely to get thin—Terence Rattigan has almost but not quite written a London version of "The Voice of the Turtle."

Comparison with "The Voice" is inevitable, for "While the Sun Shines" involves many light and amusing discourses upon love-making as it is practiced by our better class of warriors. In John Van Druten's hit a soldier and a girl fall in love and that is all there is to the play. In Mr. Rattigan's version, a sailor and a WAAF are engaged to marry, but each is beset by doubts and temptations. You'd think that these doubts and temptations would fill out the plot, but they don't seem to.

Titles All Over the Place

The sailor in this case is the Earl of Harpenden, who is an ordinary seaman in the Royal Navy in spite of his title and an \$8,000,000 fortune. The girl, an Air Force corporal, is none other than Lady Elizabeth Randall, daughter of the equally none other Duke of Ayr and Stirling.

This is indeed a snazzy setup for an American Flying Fortress bombardier to drop into, so of course he drops in. His Lordship has picked up the Yank and taken him home to sleep off a drunk. Next day the Yank craves feminine company, so his Lordship obliges by sending for his own mistress. He isn't going to need the wench any more, anyhow, because tomorrow he's to be wed.

So Far—So Good.

In comes a pretty girl whom the American takes to be the babe who has been sent for. He gets directly to work, and it is not until he has got the lass stiff on scotch, danced with her and fallen in love with her that he learns she is not the handymaid, but Lady Elizabeth. And Lady Elizabeth, overwhelmed by a Yankee blitz, is now not so sure she's in love with her titled sailor-boy.

So far, it's wonderful—fast, funny and clever. But from now on it's just a case of juggling the characters around until it's time for the audience to go home, and the juggling gets a little strained.

Max Gordon has provided an excellent company for the play. Anne Burr, as Elizabeth, is both attractive and able. Melville Cooper, as her money-cadging, horse-betting, stock-selling father, the Duke, is capital as the familiar what-what, what-ho, silly-ass Briton.

Cathleen Cordell as the helpful mistress, Stanley Bell as the titled ordinary seaman and Lewis Howard as the American all appear capably enough as a French soldier, but I don't think this complication helps the play much and maybe the character should never have been written in.

George S. Kaufmann has directed. His pacing of the first act is flawless and his timing of exit-lines is always just right—but often there are ill-contrived entrances and exits which, even he can't properly cope with. The attractive living-room set is by Edward Gilbert.

THE CAST

Horton J. P. Wilson
The Earl of Harpenden Stanley Bell
Lieutenant Mulvaney Lewis Howard
Lady Elizabeth Randall Anne Burr
The Duke of Ayr and Stirling Melville Cooper
Lieutenant Colbert Alexander Ivo
Mabel Crum Cathleen Cordell

NEW YORK POST
September 20, 1944

'While the Sun Shines' Offers a Few Laughs In Wartime London

By WILLELLA WALDORF

THE familiar spectacle of Max Gordon, producer; George S. Kaufman, stage director, and a bevy of perspiring actors working themselves into a lather trying to make something uproarious out of an obvious and only occasionally diverting comedy tossed together by a hack writer in a hurry is now on view at the Lyceum.

Terence Rattigan, a well-known British dramatist with a number of successes to his credit, may not care to be referred to as a hack writer, but his latest opus, "While the Sun Shines," which reached Broadway last night, is a not too adroit bit of hack work made up of gags about London in wartime.

Mr. Rattigan apparently hasn't overlooked a single gag, yet his play seems surprisingly sparse. The first act is reasonably amusing, the second contains several genuine guffaws, but runs on too long and finally begins to repeat itself. As for the third act, it is downright coy and Mr. Kaufman, surprisingly enough, has staged it just as coyly as it is written. Perhaps he had exhausted himself by that time and decided to go on home, leaving the actors with nothing to do but follow the stage directions.

A Noble Sailor

"While the Sun Shines" is all about the Earl of Harpenden, who's an ordinary seaman in the British Navy, but lives in chambers at the Albany when on leave, as befits his station. About to be married to Lady Elizabeth Randall, a corporal in the WAAF, he befriends a drunken American bombardier tossed out of a bottle club.

Lady Elizabeth turns up with a Free French officer she met on the train and both of the United Nations representatives decide to take the Earl's girl from him on the eve of the wedding. These are extensive complications involving Mabel Crum, a trollop who is also, of course, a good sort, and for comedy purposes the author brings in Lady Elizabeth's father, the Duke of Ayr and Stirling, a genial reprobate who plays the horses, promotes wised business schemes and seldom has enough change for taxi-fares.

At one point His Grace is enchanted by a crap game and is glimpsed snapping his fingers and moaning: "Come along you little seven, come along for Ernest Revin."

Melville Cooper is as funny as anybody possibly could be in a part that requires him to rumble on: "Am I to understand that you are battling on an entirely different wicket?" Thus giving the American a chance to reply: "Yes, Dook."

Mr. Rattigan's easy-going Earl in a sailor suit, his American bewilderment by all this business, his charming Frenchman with romantic ideas, his titled lady who doesn't like whisky but gets terribly drunk just to be a good sport, his gambling duke, his girl-about-town with a good heart—all are comedy cutouts not always as hilarious as they should be.

Stanley Bell plays the sailor-Earl with boundless enthusiasm. Anne Burr manages to make somebody almost human out of Lady Elizabeth. Cathleen Cordell is engaging as the

trollop and the United Nations are represented by Lewis Howard and Alexander Ivo with as much grace as possible under the circumstances. J. P. Wilson makes an impeccable retainer and Mr. Cooper, a droll fellow, almost bursts himself trying to turn the Duke into something more than mere caricature.

There's an excellent set by Edward Gilbert and the show will probably run a year or so. These Gordon-Kaufman concoctions generally do. We can't help wishing, though, that Mr. Kaufman would write more of the plays he directs instead of lavishing so much precious energy on other people's labored scripts.

NEW YORK SUN
September 20, 1944

'While the Sun Shines,' Done at Lyceum, Falters After Bright First Act

By WARD MOREHOUSE

FROM the London theater of the robot-bomb era comes a new comedy, Terence Rattigan's "While the Sun Shines"—a diverting, agreeable but tenuous piece, which opened last night at the Lyceum and with which Max Gordon began his season.

Now, let it be recorded at the outset that this comedy represents the professional theater, giving Broadway relief after many doleful evenings. There's usually a stir in a playhouse when one of Mr. Gordon's openings comes along, and the audience was the season's most distinguished to date. The play isn't one to do any shouting about, but it's well played and staged. I wish the whole of it could have been as gay as its beginning.

The Rattigan comedy, a long-run success of the London stage, has a tremendously amusing first act. But thereafter it goes downhill pretty steadily and the third act is skimpy, indeed. Through the piece wanders Melville Cooper as the Duke of Ayr and Stirling, and he's funny all the way. I could have taken a great deal more of him.

"While the Sun Shines" concerns the goings-on in the apartment of the Earl of Harpenden and concerns the quest of the Earl, who is a sailor in the British Navy; an American bombardier and a lieutenant of the Free French for the heart of the daughter of the insolvent Duke. It's the Earl who finally gets her, but she really belonged to him in the first place.

It's a drawing room piece, this new Rattigan comedy, and the butler is there, of course, and J. P. Wilson's Horton is in the tradition of stage butlers since Finer's day. Stanley Bell is likable as the Earl of Harpenden and Lewis Howard excellent, I thought, as the overpowering American, Lieut. Mulvaney, from out Iowa way. Alexander Ivo plays the Frenchman, who is never very much in the play. Anne Burr is an attractive heroine and Cathleen Cordell is very tough and direct as the trollop, Mabel Crum.

But the performance of the evening is that of Melville Cooper—peremptory, droll, suave and expert. He gets more out of the part than apparently was written into it. George S. Kaufman, in the staging, retains all of his directorial skill. There is an attractive setting by Edward Gilbert.

Terence Rattigan's plays are usually on the thin side and "While the Sun Shines" is no exception. There is a lot of flip and funny stuff in this piece. And some amusing situations. The new Lyceum comedy is disappointing after its bright first act, but it indicates that the theatrical season is on its way.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
September 20, 1944

While the Sun Shines An Amusing Farce

By BURTON RASCOE

I HAD quite an enjoyable evening at the opening of *While the Sun Shines* at the Lyceum last night. Most of the others there seemed to be pleasantly diverted also. It is no great shakes as a play and it is something of an affront to American pride; but the actors in it are attractive, likable and expert; the action is paced by a master director of farce-comedy, George S. Kaufman; and the preposterous story is told with an unusually high level of wit and humor. It looks like something of a hit.

Though billed as a comedy, this American edition of a current London success by Terence Rattigan, is farcical throughout, with some of the broadest caricatures of human beings ever seen outside of Old Vic's or Minerva's. You can't believe in it; in fact, you prefer not to believe in it; but, for two acts at least, it is fun. And, such a comical comedian is Melville Cooper and so lovely to look upon Anne Burr that not even the third act seems as anticlimactic as it inherently is.

Without knowing anything about it, I have a suspicion that the British version of the play might be very offensive to an American audience (and thereby, correspondingly, something a British audience would get a great kick out of); for, even in this Broadway version, in which the bolder outlines of the original have apparently been softened by the skillful direction of Mr. Kaufman and made the more palatable by generous injections of Mr. Kaufman's sardonic wit, there is an elaborate condescension toward all of Britain's allies, especially America, that is characteristically British.

The Yeddy Best People.

The play is ostensibly about the pursuit, by an American bombardier and a Free French lieutenant, of the daughter of the Duke of Ayr and Stirling, when that young lady (a WAF) is engaged to marry the young Earl of Harpenden, a matelot or gob in the British navy; but basically the play is about how wonderful the British aristocracy is—that is to say, those members of it who have their money in London real estate rather than in agricultural or mining property—how cultured, how fine, how generous, how sporting, how sweet, how superior these Britishers of still intact fortunes are. . . . The members of the British aristocracy who have been hard hit by the war and by the economic revolution, however, are, in Mr. Rattigan's picture of things, a very sordid, fatuous, cheap, snide and money-grubbing lot—though amusing.

The American bombardier (Lewis Howard) in Mr. Rattigan's farce is a boob, a clodhopper, a lout, a well-meaning enough chap but of a sort that the sooner he gets out of England and back in Elizabeth, N. J., driving a truck and married to a girl named Gertie, the better for all concerned. . . . The Frenchman (Alexander Ivo) in Mr. Rattigan's conception is the Gaston of the Alphonse and Gaston comic strip of 30 years ago. . . . And Mr. Rattigan permits both of the women in his play, one Lady Elizabeth Randall (Anne Burr) and the other Mabel Crum (Cathleen Cordell), a tart with a class-conscious heart of pure gold, to compare the young Earl of Harpenden with the American and the Frenchman to the former's great advantage in words that are a very superior sort of snobbishness.

Amusing Farce

But, if you are able to discount all the unpleasant intimations of Mr. Rattigan, you should find this farce very amusing in spots and entertaining throughout. When the Duke of Ayr and Stirling (Melville Cooper), a follower of the races (when he can get a bookie to take his ten shilling-bet) learns the American crap game and gets down on his knees to gamble as to who will get his daughter's hand, you are in for a good horse laugh. Mr. Cooper plays the Duke very much in the manner of Leon Errol's Lord Ramsbottom,

but he is funny. And there are some subtleties of wit (which probably are Mr. Kaufman's) that are shrewd and satirical commentaries. . . . Miss Burr gains in stature as an actress with every new play. She has a sense of acting as well as beauty. The others in the cast also gave good accounts of themselves.

NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE
September 21, 1944

The Dark Clouds Are Lifted

By HOWARD BARNES

A GAY drawing room comedy has come ramping to the rescue of the faltering season. "While the Sun Shines" is not remarkable for its theme. It is not particularly long on comic invention. But this Max Gordon importation from the London theater is lit-erate, amusing and smartly turned out. The lines are full of gentle laughter, while the stage business is apt and generally engaging. Broadway owes a bow to the Strand for the new festivities at the Lyceum Theater.

It can take a good deal of credit to itself and its craftsmen. For that canny director, George S. Kaufman, has kept the Terence Rattigan comedy spinning merrily on a dime's worth of plot and Melville Cooper, Lewis Howard, Stanley Bell, Anne Burr and the other players keep it glinting through its farcical gyrations. Such random antics as a telephone call to a racetrack are tremendously funny. Better still, the piece hangs together in its slight frame, asking slight indulgence and offering a fair quota of entertainment. The season is finally on the right track.

One can readily understand why "While the Sun Shines" has been a solid success in London. Although it is essentially a genteel conversation piece, uniforms, various members of the Allied armed forces and the less serious rigors of war time give old situations a facade of freshness. The romantic bewilderment of a sheltered noblewoman who finds herself attracted first by a Free French flier and then by an American bombardier on the eve of her wedding to an earl makes a delightful fabric of fooling. The meddling of the bride-to-be's reprobate of a father adds immensely to the fun.

Cooper has a role right up his alley as the unscrupulous father of the lady in the dark. His performance is meticulously delightful as he bets on the ponies, takes the earl in a crap game and gets taken himself by a party girl on the mistaken assumption that she is in the chips. Cathleen Cordell is close behind him in exploiting the Rattigan humor as the ex-mistress of the earl, while Miss Burr is charming as the romantically ignorant aristocrat. Howard is splendid in the part of the forceful Yankee; Bell contributes a languid caricature of "a doomed class," and Alexander Ivo and J. P. Wilson add telling bits to the performance. "While the Sun Shines" is well acted and admirably directed, and, praise the Lord, it has a fabric of genuine comedy in the writing.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
September 20, 1944

"While Sun Shines" Opens at Lyceum

By ROBERT GARLAND

AND it's real regretful I am that "While the Sun Shines" didn't come to a better ending last night at the Lyceum. Written by Terence Rattigan, staged by George Kaufman, set by Edward Gilbert and produced by Max Gordon, with a yearful of London performances behind it, the new arrival in 45th Street gave every promise of being a wonder and a wow. But alas, alack and Variety's

Princeton reporter to the contrary, it grows no more admirable as it moves along.

It grows less admirable, really. Laid in the sitting-room of Lord Harpenden's chambers in the very Albany in which Sherlock Holmes used to live and meet his Dr. Watson, the first act is downright funny. The second act has its hilarious moments, but they fade away as the stanzas near its end. The third act is practically non-existent.

This is a pity. For what sets out to be a drawing-room comedy with bedroom overtones, ends up by being a two-act—a one-and-a-half act, to break down and confess it—play with a curtain-lowerer that might just as well remain unperformed. Having raised your hopes at the beginning of the evening, "While the Sun Shines" slowly, but surely, lets them down. The actors, who are excellent, and the direction, which is clever, are not to blame. Blame the playwright.

Oscar Wilde-ian

The story, projected for more than it's worth on the Lyceum's historic stage, is, when you look beneath the dialogue, as silly as it is incredible. If Oscar Wilde had managed to keep himself in the London theatrical limelight and out of Reading Gaol, he might well have lived to concoct it. All the stock Wilde-ian characters are there—the up-stage manservant, the nit-wit Lord, the Lady engaged to him, the Lady's haw-haw father, the professional girl-about-town.

These, along with an American Lieutenant Mulvaney and a French Lieutenant Colbert, spend three acts and four scenes in those Albany chambers of the Earl of Harpenden, proposing to the Lady Elizabeth and un-proposing to the Lady Elizabeth, while the Lady Elizabeth is constantly making up and making down her mind.

Thanks to some sparkling dialogue in the earlier section of the evening, not to again mention the excellence of the acting and the cleverness of the direction, you at first forget the paucity of the plot and the familiarity of the situations. But by the time the third and final stanza—the curtain-lowerer, as had been said—is unveiled up on the boards, you realize, much against your wishes, that the play has run down, that the actors are merely talking against time.

NEW YORK TIMES
September 20, 1944

Duke and Earl

By LEWIS NICHOLS

TERRENCE RATTIGAN'S new comedy, "While the Sun Shines," can be cut into as even segments as it is possible to find in the theatre. Two-thirds of it are generally amusing and one-third, the last, as they show it to you at the Lyceum—is not so good. As a play it is shot through with almost as many holes as a piece of the best Swiss cheese, but, for an evening at a playhouse, the acting is good, and George S. Kaufman's direction hurries everything along. There well may be funnier comedies before the year ends, but "While the Sun Shines" will do until they come around. Two-thirds is passing in any season; in this one in particular it is nothing short of genius.

Mr. Rattigan's play, which London also has seen, is a sort of amalgam of Noel Coward and P. G. Wodehouse before the latter made his serious mistake. There are a young Lord, an impoverished Duke, a nice girl, a girl who has been around, a stately butler whose name could be but Iain-Jeeva. Since "While the Sun Shines" is modern, there also are an American bombardier and a Free French officer. The Lord and the nice girl are engaged; the nice girl grows upset over the American; the Duke learns how to shoot craps and is confused over money—a Wodehouse plot not always free of sagging moments.

Luckily, the local management—Max Gordon—has Melville Cooper to star. As the faintly dazed Duke, he is giving a very funny performance. He is wry, ultra-British, beating out his brains with assorted troubles. Two good acts of Melville Cooper are worth

"While the Sun Shines"—continued

going quite a distance to see Stanley Bell is the young Earl, so much of a Wodehouse character that for year he has been a sailor, unable to become an officer. Lewis Howard is the American lieutenant, possibly making that character a little too Midwestern for an English comedy. Cathleen Cordell is properly casual as the girl who has been around; Anne Burr is the other.

With the direction sometimes given to English comedies as they reach this side of the water, "While the Sun Shines" could be pretty slow. Mr. Kaufman has fixed that. Where he has been able to do so, he has built in an amiable kind of rowdiness, as though he, too, were indulging in a good-natured prank on the British. If he never got around to making a complete job on the third act, possibly Mr. Rattigan tried before him, deciding to end the play any way he could. There are some wonderful lines in the early sections of the dialogue, and as a director Mr. Kaufmann is not one to let a good line go to waste.

It is pleasant to hear laughter in the theatre again, and despite its occasional lapses, "While the Sun Shines" does give it. Jeeves will settle for that.

BUY WAR BONDS

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM

September 20, 1944

It's a Pale British Sun

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

AFTER a couple of weeks of awful plays, the theater was back on a professional basis Tuesday night; but it was professional without being much more. The trouble with "While the Sun Shines" is that it doesn't shine for any length of time. In spite of George S. Kaufman's brisk and steady direction, Mr. Rattigan's comedy starts wobbling after the first act, and completely wobbles after the second. It has some funny lines and fairly entertaining scenes; it has, also, Melville Cooper's adroit acting to lighten the load; but it is generally a silly play, shutting bumpily between comedy and farce; and once it goes off the track, it never gets back on again.

Mr. Rattigan has given a mild wartime slant to his play, but its materials are old, or classic, as you choose to describe them. On the eve of his marriage, a young earl puts up a pickled American lieutenant for the night; and the next morning dates him up with the mistress he is discarding. The American mistakes the earl's fiancée for the mistress, and the two of them fall in love before he learns his mistake. What with a Free French officer

also in the race, the mistress very much in evidence, and the fiancée's father, a deadbeat duke, adding to the complications, "While the Sun Shines" grows very involved indeed. Too involved for its own good.

For one thing, Mr. Rattigan can't maintain a consistent tone. He plunges the girl and the American into straightforward romance, which doesn't seem handled lightly enough; on the other hand, he makes the earl a stock comic figure, and the Frenchman a stock farcical one. Thus the love-making is played on three different levels that work to one another's harm. As light or romantic comedy the play quite misses; it only wakes up when it veers toward farce, yet it can never quite catch the tempo of farce, or bring you to the point of accepting it frankly as nonsense. Too many half-way realistic scenes keep cutting in.

Probably all this would not bulk very large if Mr. Rattigan had written consistently amusing dialogue. Unfortunately his funny lines and pleasant scenes are enlisted in a lot of talk that is merely silly, or old-hat, or downright feeble. The direction helps some of this but can't really hide it.

Mr. Cooper has made a very entertaining character of the duke, and there are nice performances by Lewis Howard as the American, Stanley Bell as the earl, and Cathleen Cordell as the fly lady. But the acting is generally not expert enough to remove the spots and wrinkles from the play.

"Star Time"

Vaudeville show presented by Paul Small at the Majestic Theatre, September 12, 1944, with Lou Holtz, Benny Fields, Tony & Sally DeMarco, the Berry Brothers, Shirley Dennis, Jimmy & Mildred Mulcahy, the Whitson Brothers, Armand Cortez, Francine Bordeau and George Prospery.

NEW YORK SUN
September 12, 1944

'Star Time,' New Vaudeville Show, Brings Back Lou Holtz in Top Form

By WARD MOREHOUSE

LOU HOLTZ, glib and waggish and voluble as ever, is back on Broadway and the first-night news is better today. Back he comes with his cane, his cigar and his stories in dialect, returning as head man in the new vaudeville show, "Star Time," which began to play last evening at the Majestic.

"Star Time" isn't the best variety show you ever saw but it's generally all right and in the tradition of its predecessors, "Show Time" and "Laugh Time," and I suspect that there will be commotion at the Majestic in evenings to come. The prices are right and playgoers will buy "Star Time."

Paul Small, a canny showman, couldn't have picked a better time to come in. Think, you see, have been getting fairly desperate in the local theater lately. Several of the recent offerings have been more or less outrageous. And now along comes a vaudeville show with a scant production, a few props and a few people, and you actually hear laughter again in a theater. There was some of it last night from aisle-seat gentlemen who are paid to report judiciously on such matters as these.

Lou Holtz is in top form. Dapper, droll and artful, he ambles through "Star Time," pacing and pausing, telling his leisurely stories, calling on many dialects, twirling his cane, and bringing in his favorite character of Sam Lapidus. Besides this wily raconteur, the principal assets of the show at the Majestic are Benny Fields and the DeMarcos, Tony and Sally.

Benny Fields is present with his songs and gives a thrilling rendition of "Over There." The DeMarcos always show-stoppers, dance delightfully. The Berry Brothers are dancing fools and go through their routines with great skill.

There is no animal act on the bill but there are acrobats, the Whitson Brothers obliging. Jimmy and Mildred Mulcahy do their stuff with the harmonica and Shirley Dennis goes back to "Show Boat" for her song selections. The orchestra is under the direction of Waldemar Peterson.

"Star Time" comes direct from San Francisco, and to Broadway in time of need. It's welcome.

And so, indeed, is Mr. Holtz.

NEW YORK POST
September 12, 1944

Lou Holtz Stars in 'Star Time' Without Benefit of Microphone

By WILLELLA WALDORF

LOU HOLTZ is the main reason for going to see Paul Small's latest vaudeville show, "Star Time," which opened an engagement last night at the Majestic. Mr. Holtz's old jokes are funnier than his new ones, but he's a droll fellow, especially when mixing into other people's acts.

Some masters of ceremony who mess around in other people's acts are apt to become obnoxious. Not Mr. Holtz. He has a way of coming in on an encore with just the right touch of comedy to make you forget the act itself wasn't much in the first place. He indulges in a dash of tricky acrobatics, some sinister harmonica playing, ballroom dancing, even Russian ballet, and is particularly adept at taking bows with deep humility. Altogether, a funny man.

What "Star Time" would do without him we shudder to think. The rest of the show consists of some expert performers almost everybody has seen before, not once but many times—the dancing De Marcas in several ballroom numbers; the Berry Brothers, Negro steppers; Whitson Brothers, adroit acrobats—plus another group of entertainers who insist

upon performing glued to a microphone.

They're Mike-Bound

In this category are Benny Fields, an old-timer who warbles "arrangements" of a sentimental and patriotic nature; Shirley Dennis, a blonde shouter introduced by Mr. Holtz as a "19-year-old coming star," and Jimmy and Mildred Mulcahy, who are very good on a large selection of harmonicas, including some about two feet long.

All of them do a good deal of reeling, writhing and gesturing. But they are hopelessly mike-bound, and that's all wrong for what is supposed to be the vaudeville stage. The program notes that Benny Fields is a Palace alumnus. We never heard him there, but doubt very much if he had a mike with him in those days.

And so we come back to Lou Holtz who never uses a microphone and is not only audible but puts himself on easy, informal terms with his audience by strolling around all over the stage, and occasionally down into the aisles or up into a box as well. They ought to call the show "Holtz Time."

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
September 12, 1944

An Old Vaudeville Man, Lou Holtz, Makes 'Star Time' a Good Time

By JOHN CHAPMAN

THE latest sample of what has become known as Small Time was presented at the Majestic Theatre last night under the title of "Star Time." In it Paul Small, a sharp collector of vaudeville turns, offered a variety bill headed by Lou Holtz. Any show which has Mr. Holtz in it is all right by me.

Seeing Lou again after a long, long time was fun. Watching him describe a ballet, or do the pogo dance with the acrobatic Berry brothers, was a delight. And hearing him tell his stories was welcoming old friends—very old.

Holts is the best story-teller on the stage today, and he can take a gag which a bar-room wit would bore you to death with and make it remarkably amusing. When standard jokes happen to his character, Sam Lapidus, they become new. Lou's timing is practically infallible, and this also makes him valuable as a master of ceremonies of a vaudeville show, where acts must get on and off with a certain dash.

Fields a Co-Star

The program opens with the Whitson brothers, okay as acrobats. Jimmy and Mildred Mulcahy are so beguiling with a basketful of harmonicas that Holts must pick himself a couple of mouth-organs and join in. Tony and Sally De Marco do their customarily excellent, fast-paced ballroom turn, and the Berry brothers do their whirlwind exercises.

Co-starred with Holts and the De Marcos is Benny Fields, the minstrel man. Mr. Fields' type of song delivery—which is nineteenth-century recitative and one-tenth familiar melody—is admired by thousands but I unhappily am not one of them. Whenever Fields nuzzles a microphone I am reminded of what Groucho Marx said when Chico was just monkeying around with the piano. Snapped Groucho: "If you get near a tune play it." This attitude makes me a churl and I apologize to Benny and his army of friends.

Trombonist Slips

The orchestra is a very good one conducted by Waldemar Gulterson. Last night the De Marcos set such a fast pace for ten minutes that afterward the front trombone player had to fan himself with a sheaf of music for a couple of minutes. The waving song sheets killed a couple of Holts jokes for our side of the house, and if I'd been Lou I'd have bopped the trombonist with my cane, the way W. C. Fields crowned another fly-catcher, Ed Wynn, with a billiard cue.

The program notes, by Richard Maney, are as funny as anything else in the show. Having established this style of telling what is about to happen, I wish Mr. Maney would extend it to his other publicity accounts. I'd like, for instance, to read a similar fourteen-line summary of "The Searching Wind."

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM

September 13, 1944

Star Time Brings Back Old Vaudeville Days

By BURTON RASCOE

THE theatrical season may now be considered officially open, with the arrival at the Majestic last night of a well-balanced vaudeville bill, entitled *Star Time*, under the auspices of Paul Small. For those who are unhappy because the great days of vaudeville at the Palace are no more, *Star Time*, though somewhat on the slow and sedate side, should provide a satisfactory contemporary substitute.

The dialectical materialism of Lou Holts pervades the show and gives it its social significance. He has three new Sam Lapidus stories, all good, and several other stories besides. As master of ceremonies he provides the only hilarity of the evening, but inasmuch as he is on stage quite often, the comic sag is not as serious as it otherwise might be.

High Spots

The high spots of the entertainment are: Tony & Sally de Marco, who are tops in ballroom dancing, with some very fetching demonstrations of their art; Shirley Dennis, a luscious and lovely young chanteuse with an original way of singing familiar songs in such a synopated manner that you can hardly recognize them (what she did to Ole Man River was a caution); the Berry Brothers, Negro strutters and acrobatic dancers; Benny Fields, a night club favorite, who has a kind of voice that is difficult to identify, being a sort of cross between a basso and a high tenor, with studied mechanical mannerisms

that seem to stem from the hoity-toity technique of singers at Niblo's Gardens. If the historians are correct.

Acrobats, Too

Then there are the now familiar Whitson Brothers, in their always amazing feats of balancing and tumbling, and Jimmy and Mildred Mulcahy, harmonica players, who have instruments that are tripe-decked and some that are three feet long, out of which they get some strange sweet noises. Lastly there is a comedy skit, in French, that is ludicrous rather than comical, for which Mr. Holts provides a running mistranslation of the dialogue. There is a competent orchestra under the direction of Waldemar Gulterson.

The spirit of the whole thing is pleasant, friendly, and decorously informal. There was nothing I could get enthusiastic about, but nothing I can disapprove of, either.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

September 14, 1944

Shades of the Palace

By HOWARD BARNES

IT IS an index to the poverty of the new season that a hit-or-miss variety show is lots more entertaining than the run of recent offerings. "Star Time" boasts almost nothing in the way of novelty, but its parade of specialty acts is sprightly and sometimes genuinely amusing. Lou Holts works overtime to give the Majestic melange a bit of cohesion, the De Marcos dance as well as I have ever seen them, Benny Fields and the Berry Brothers do their stuff and there are the usual handstanders to open the program.

If you like the aforementioned experts, this new invasion of the theater by vaudeville is likely to prove a pleasant diversion. Paul Small has not succeeded in assembling a very varied group of performers for his production, if it may be distinguished by that term, but his company is definitely competent. The Whitson Brothers put on fancy tumbling, Jimmy and Mildred Mulcahy do tricks with harmonicas, while a newcomer to the big time, Shirley Dennis, attempts to combine the antics of Betty Hutton with the throaty enthusiasm of Ethel Merman.

It is Holts who carries the proceedings. He is in there chatting with the audience and telling anecdotes between every act. Moreover, he participates in almost every number, giving a brilliant comic lift to conventional routines. Actually, he pulls off a sort of one-man show, embroidered by variety antics.

The De Marcos are generous with their encores and have chosen a bewildering succession of dances to demonstrate their stuff. Fields has a field day with popular ballads, topped by a medley of contemporary war songs to prove that "Over There" is still the best. The settings are abbreviated but tasteful, and the program notes of Richard Maney worth a perusal. "Star Time" is no great shakes, but at the moment it makes vaudeville look far from dead.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

September 13, 1944

Variety

By LEWIS NICHOLS

SINCE it is the autumn, the season for reviving vaudeville again is at hand, and to keep this agreeable franchise intact, another show has come out of the West, "Star Time," which arrived last evening at the Majestic. To say that it is an evening with Lou Holts is to give due credit to the demon of the one-time Palace, but it also is necessary to say that as variety, "Star Time" lacks sprightliness. The corpse of a late departed muse trembled a bit last evening, but it did

not get up to do a dance; vaudeville, on the evidence, has not been fully revived.

There is nothing wrong with Mr. Holts. As he made his first appearance distributing candy and casual comments, the evening started off as in the old days. He still has his series of fabulous tales, each sentence a climax until sometimes at the end the topper is no climax at all. He gets into the tag end of other acts, which is the proper place for a master of ceremonies, named Holts, to be. He can hold an audience indefinitely, and even offer a soft persuasion that the turn following is to be show business' greatest. But too often in "Star Time," the turn following is not new, or is sent along to the customers a bit dully. Vaudeville should be faster and more exciting than this.

There are some well-known names of what is called "stage, screen and radio" to assist the evening with Lou Holts—or not to assist it as the case may be. Tony and Sally de Marco are there for the ballroom dancing, which is perhaps a little polite. Benny Fields is on hand to sing a group of songs, and a newcomer named Shirley Dennis for ditto. Miss Dennis is blonde, 19, and should learn to keep away from that damned microphone; Mr. Fields should learn to keep away from the same thing. Both their voices emerged from the roof of the Majestic as though sandpaper were scratching over time. Mr. Holts, great man that he is, carefully removed the microphone before doing his stuff. Vaudeville and the theatre are better that way.

Of the others, the three Berry Brothers do their dances, the Whitson Brothers do their acrobatics, and Jimmy and Mildred Mulcahy play a couple of dozen harmonicas. There is quite a bad sketch in the first act, one even bad enough to defeat the master himself. The songs range from the usual torch histories to an ambitious project of Mr. Fields to get "Over There" recognized as the war song this time, too. While it is a pleasure to have one of the funniest comedians in the business back at a familiar station, the difficulty with "Star Time" is just that there is no addition news. The old acts are there, the old manners; energy, gaiety, pleasure have been lost somewhere. Too bad, too.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

September 13, 1944

'Star Time' Opens As Vaudeville Show

By ROBERT GARLAND

VAUDEVILLE is definitely dead. I'm sorry to come right out and say so, but vaudeville is as dead as dead can be. If Lou Holts can't bring the business back to life, nobody can. And Lou Holts can't. Last night, at the Majestic, he tried. God knows, he worked at trying overtime. But vaudeville, billed as such by Paul Small, the producer, remained deliberately defunct. Every time Mr. Holts came on the stage, came in one hand, better forgotten smutty stories in the other, vaudeville buried itself deep and deeper. I've been reading in the papers that Mr. Holts is getting three thousand dollars a week for telling dull and dirty wisecracks. If he is, he ought to be ashamed of himself. He and vaudeville, on its deathbed. Whenever I woke up last night at the Majestic, he was relating the one about the guy-who-had-to-go or some such Palacian stupidity.

To come right out and confess it, I only hung around in 44th st. for the first half of "Star Time." But, during that early part of a long-drawn, unhappy evening, Mr. Holts, unsupported by his stick and his leer, wore me good and down. Time after time, I relaxed myself ragged trying to remember when and where I had heard that shabby gag before. And, when I came around to the answer, it was always years and years ago, at the Palace. Or in some pre-World War I Pullman smoking-room, en route to the Billy Rose fests down in Dallas or the World's Fair out in Chicago.

"Star Time"—continued

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
September 12, 1944

Holts Emcees

Some Dead Cats

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

AS all the world knows, Lou Holts is a mighty fine teller of stories, master of ceremonies, and purveyor of impromptu; and in *Star Time*, Paul Small's new vaudeville show, he darn well has to be. For baring the DeMarcos, who are fetching but pretty familiar, and the acrobatic Whitson Brothers, who are pretty familiar too, Mr. Small has lined up acts that are generally

dreary and occasionally dreadful. Vaudeville may not be dead, but the exhibits in *Star Time* are no way to prove it isn't.

However—and fortunately—Mr. Holts's part in the proceedings is a highly extensive one. He is on hand before all the audience is, offering some of the customers chocolates, and some of them chestnuts, like "I hope your marriage lasts as long as mine seems." He introduces all the acts and interjects himself into most of them, and keeps his cane company while joking with the audience, joshing the producer, feeling off yams, and recounting the further adventures of Sam Lapidus. Mr. Holts knows how to do it, and how to be breezy without being brassy. It is true, as he says, that "new stories are a bit out of my line"; the wonder is that he can do so well with the old ones. It is also true that

Mr. Holts suffers a little from having to go it all alone; the last time he presided, Willie Howard was on hand to raise the roof with. But we are not complaining about Mr. Holts.

Benny Fields, who is co-starred in the billing, I have never seen before. His voice is all right, and maybe in a night club the effect is also; but between the mike he brayed into and the corny songs he brayed into them, he seemed notably unexciting. Shirley Dennis, a new chanteuse who also gives herself to the mike (the mike will have to go if vaudeville plans to stay) is even less of a treat. And a harmonica team named Mulcahy manage to give that most drubbed of compositions, the Second Hungarian Rhapsody, its all-time drubbing.

It's Mr. Holts's evening; which is almost, but not quite, enough.

"Down to Miami"

Comedy by Conrad Westervelt; staged by J. B. Daniels; production supervised by Macurdy Hilliard; settings by Stewart Chaney. Presented by Edgar MacGregor at the Ambassador Theatre, September 11, 1944.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM...
September 12, 1944

Down to Miami Gets

Down to a New Low

By BURTON RASCOE

MAYBE there are some among you who yearn to be first-nighters, who think it would be glorious just to be there on the opening night of a Broadway show and to rub elbows, as you glide in and out of your orchestra seat, with celebrities of the stage and screen, with the chroniclers of saloon society and the persons who send them items about themselves (particularly when they are inaccurate and scandalous) with the names that make news and the names that make the files of the Police Department and the FBI.

If there be any such among you, congratulate yourselves, dear people, that such a routine, as a regular thing, is denied you. Be content with your role in life, whatever it is; for nothing can be worse agony than being a first-nighter when the offering is something like *Down to Miami*, which opened last night at the Ambassador.

Audience Underrated

Here is a play that doesn't merely insult your intelligence but assumes that you are a moron and then kicks you in the face. It is a libelous and meretricious assumption that the New York theater audience is without taste, without a sense of decency, without brains or sensitivity. . . . I hope I am being generous to the Messrs. MacGregor and Westervelt, the producer and the author of this insult in assuming they thought they had chosen the right time to put on clap-trap version of Abie's Irish Rose in order to make a lot of money; for I should hate to think that any author could be so imbecile or any producer so lacking in a sense of the cash register as to offer anything like *Down to Miami* seriously. If they thought they were going to make money out of it, I could forgive them. I can't forgive them if they thought they were doing a service in the cause of racial misunderstanding. If that was their aim, they were libeling the whole human race, for there was not a character in the whole play that is remotely like any human being I ever knew.

The Exodus Begins

I noticed that people began to squirm in their seats after the delayed curtain (it didn't go up until 9:10) had been up five minutes. Never in the theater have I felt such an awful silence as that which greeted Mr. Westervelt's special attempts to be funny. And when he stripped a girl to brassiere and panties and devoted 20 minutes to discussions by her father, a department store proprietor from Springfield, Ohio, and the son of a banker in this same town as to

THE CAST

Torrence Applegate	Herbert Heyes
Mrs. Applegate	Merle Maddern
Rufus Applegate	Charles Lang
Helen Gunston	Lyn Logan
Stella	Anna Franklin
Morris Mandel	Robert Leonard
Mrs. Mandel	Dora Weissman
Harry Katz	John Gould
Gloria Mandel	Elaime Ellis
Lois	Robert Strauss
Waiter	Zac Cully
Michael O'Hara	Brian O'Mara

whether this costume was decent or not, I thought everybody was going to walk out on the show.

Some of them did. But there were many of us who were guests of the management, including us working newspapermen, and others who were guests of members of the cast. We had to stick it out. At the end of the second act there were many absentees, however; and when the curtain went up (after half an hour's delay) on the third act, the house was a third empty. . . . The Shuberts, who own the theater, turned the lights out in front after the thing opened. That was the only sensible act of the evening.

I shall remind any of the players that they were in any such show. I will say that J. B. Daniels, who directed the play, mustn't like actors, otherwise he wouldn't have gone out of his way to make them appear to such silly disadvantage.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
September 12, 1944

Down to Rock Bottom

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IT'S only September, but if you're any sort of gambler, don't hesitate to place your wad on *Down to Miami* as the worst play of the season. Lobby gossip had it that this tale of a Gentile boy and a Jewish girl and their families was produced to prove what a masterpiece *Abie's Irish Rose* had been. That is as charitable an explanation as any, for *Down to Miami* is inconceivably bad in every respect, and each time you are sure it can't get any worse, it somehow manages to. Even the intermissions were interminable, as though the play were written from act to act.

Despite its theme, it is misleading to suggest a similarity between *Down to Miami* and *Abie's Irish Rose*, because Mr. Westervelt's comedy quite lacks the good humor that made the Anne Nichols play palatable to millions. Most of the characters in *Down to Miami* are distinctly unpleasant; even the

romance becomes a shameless ruse on the girl's part to trap the young man into marrying her. Mr. Westervelt throws in some pious remarks about racial tolerance, but his play is generally ungratifying in its tone and frequently offensive in its taste. All this is much harder to forgive than its musty plot, its wretched dialogue, or its ghastly humor. The production was hardly much better, but there was every reason to sympathize with the actors.

NEW YORK POST
September 12, 1944

"Down to Miami" a Sorry Comedy Overwhelmed By Its Own Scenery

By WILELLA WALDORF

IT was evident two minutes after the curtain rose—late last night at the Ambassador Theatre that "*Down to Miami*" would go down in history as one of the deadlier comedies of the new theatrical season.

The scene: Terrace breakfast room of the Rooney Square Hotel. Mr. Applegate, banker, and Mrs. Applegate, society matron of Springfield (name your own state) were discussing their horrified discovery that the Mandels were staying in the same hotel.

Since the audience had no idea who the Mandels might be, Mrs. Applegate told Mr. Applegate that they were millionaire department store owners in Springfield and big depositors in the Applegate bank. Whereupon Mr. Applegate told Mrs. Applegate that the Mandels might be rich but that the Applegates had never considered them socially acceptable.

After a good deal of this, the Applegates went away and the Mandels came in, talking about the Applegates.

The Mandels were down in Miami trying to marry off their daughter Gloria, a graduate of Schmidt's College, to Harry Katz, whose father also owned a Springfield department store.

Oddly enough, the Applegates were in town for the purpose of marrying their son Rufus to Helen Gunston, whose father owned another Springfield bank.

In a desperate effort to lend the plot a modern touch, both young Applegate and young Katz were marine officers on furlough.

Scenery a Bit Drunk

The inevitable business of bringing the Applegates and the Mandels together through their offspring required more time than you might think. Although the comedy, such as it was, could have been run off without undue fuss in one act, the management hired Stewart Chaney, no less, to design three elegant Rooney Square backgrounds at con-

siderable expense.

Mr. Chaney flung himself into the task so heartily that the stage-hands, apparently, were completely unnerved. They required so much time to change the scenery that the intermissions were, if possible longer than the acts.

By the time the third act—the Mandels' suite—came around, morale backstage was at a low ebb. Mr. Chaney's opulent set gasped at the seams, letting in slits of blue, blue Miami sky. The door, too, looked a bit drunk, though no drunker, to be sure, than Banker Applegate and Papa Mandel, who finally forgot their respective social positions over a bottle of Scotch.

The author of this incredibly debilitating piece, Conrad Westervelt, even included an Irish tenor policeman who acted as cupid and also sang "Mother Macree" and "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms . . ."

Hard on the Nary

Members of the audience who hadn't the sense to leave long before that were finally reduced to counting the rows of gold braid on the Naval officers in the stage boxes. Before the curtain finally descended on a scene of Applegate-Mandel bliss, including shrill cries of ecstasy from the colored maid, we managed to identify three captains, a lieutenant and an admiral. All of them had seen foreign service and were probably very sorry they had come home.

The actors, who often appeared uncomfortable, tried without much success to pretend that "Down to Miami" was worth all the trouble and expense. Robert Leonard and Dora Weisman are funny Jewish comedians when they have any help from an author, but they were hard put to it to raise a laugh last night. As the young lovers, Charles Lang and Elaine Ellis were attractive enough to deserve a better play.

NEW YORK TIMES
September 12, 1944

Mawruss

By LEWIS NICHOLS

WHILE it was listed on the staid pages of The Playbill as a comedy, "Down to Miami" probably was a hallucination. All this season the faithful have wondered whether every other new play was not the worst in years—a search that now can be ended officially. "Down to Miami," at the Ambassador, is it. About some Jewish folks and some Christian bankers, all with their young in the Southland, it makes the somewhat similar "Abie's Irish Rose" seem like the Pulitzer Prize winner for all the years that one ran. Robert Leonard, who was Mawruss Perlmutter in a happier day, heads the cast, no member of which seemed happy last night, or should be now. Conrad Westervelt wrote it. Fie!

NEW YORK SUN
September 12, 1944

'Down to Miami,' Trite and Tiresome Comedy, Has Premiere at Ambassador

By WARD MOREHOUSE

THE drama, having a dreadful time of it this season, experienced tough going again last night when "Down to Miami" opened at the Ambassador. Here is an old-style, low-comedy fable of Jew vs. Gentile, of the Mandels vs. the Applegates, of love and romance beneath the Florida palms. It's a lot of fancy scenery wasted on a very tiresome show.

"Down to Miami" brings the Mandels, Popa and Momma and daughter Gloria, and the snooty Applegates, including their handsome son, Rufus, together in the same ocean-front hotel—the Rooney Square, they call it—and after three interminable acts and a couple of

songs by an Irish cop Gloria gets her man and the Mandels and the Applegates are happily in business together.

If the play was too much for last night's audience at the Ambassador the scene changes seemed quite too much for the backstage crew, the intermissions being the longest in many a month. It was 11:20 P. M. before Mr. Mandel, who has a department store, and Mr. Applegate, who is a banker, begin getting tight together, and there was still more to come.

Conrad Westervelt, new to Broadway's playwrighting ranks, has written this piece, the experienced Edgar MacGregor has produced it, and the dialect and character comedian, Robert Leonard, has the leading role. Mr. Leonard, after all those performances in "Abie's Irish Rose," is back to a familiar routine. Elaine Ellis and Charles Lang are the young lovers and they are really all right. Give Miss Ellis a part that had a chance and she could play it.

They've put a lot of money into this new comedy; Stewart Chaney's settings show it. But there was no indication in 49th Street that Mr. Westervelt's play will pay off.

"Down to Miami" is trite, long-winded and heavy-gaited playwrighting in its feeblest state.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
September 12, 1944

'Down to Miami' Bows At the Ambassador

By ROBERT GARLAND

LAST night, Sept. 11, 1944, at the Ambassador Theatre, 215 W. 49th St., Manhattan, Edgar MacGregor presented "Down to Miami," a "comedy" by Conrad Westervelt. The staging was by J. B. Daniels. The scenery was by Stewart Chaney. The production was supervised by Macurdy Hilliard. The first curtain, announced for 8:40, rose reluctantly at 9:03. The final curtain fell, with what sounded like a thud, at 11:27.

Act by act, scene by scene, speech by speech, the evening's audience had been one of diminishing returns. Give me credit, though, I stuck it out. Along with Bob Coleman of The Mirror.

The entire action of the "comedy" took place "in and around" the Rooney Square Hotel in Miami Beach, Fla. There were three acts and an equal number of scenes. The first act took place in the terrace breakfast room in late morning. The second act took place in the lounging room of a private bathing suite, that afternoon. The third act took place in the Morris Mandel suite, the day following. Time was a snail at the Ambassador . . .

After the opening interlude, down in the men's smoking-room and lounge, a porter announced that the curtain was going up on the second act. "You couldn't make it the last act, could you?" a paying customer inquired . . . Which gives you some idea.

Talkation
There must have been a plot lying around, somewhere. But what it was and where it was, I've not the least idea. For a while I imagined it was "Romeo and Juliet" in reverse. Then I thought it was "Abie's Irish Rose" in double-talk. After that, I just didn't care. For what had started out to be an evening's entertainment turned out to be an endurance contest, a theatrical talkathon with the folks out front as sufferers with nowhere to go but out.

Mandel talked against Applegate. Applegate talked against Gunston. Gunston talked against Katz. Katz talked against his better judgment and a bad time was had by all.

The staging, as such, was deplorable. The scenery, as such, was uncalled for. The "production supervision," as such, was invisible. The women's gowns, as such, were unbecoming. The men's costumes, as such, were ditto. The dialogue, as such, was incredible. The humor, as such, was painful. The acting, as such, was incredible. The singing, as such, was tenor. And the intermissions, with ten-cent other, were a godsend. . . .

The production is owned and controlled by "Down to Miami" Productions. But word came at a later hour last evening to the Ambassador, saying that the Miami Chamber of Commerce had promised not to sue . . . No hit! no run! All errors!

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
September 12, 1944

'Down to Miami' Apes 'Abie' But It Is Insulting Instead of Funny

By JOHN CHAPMAN

NO more insulting dramatic production could be made than "Down to Miami," which was presented at the Ambassador Theatre last night by Edgar MacGregor. There have been plays just as foolish, but I can't think of any which has been underlaid with such cold contempt.

Contempt, I mean, for the paying audience it professes to entertain. Contempt, too, for Anne Nichols, who wrote "Abie's Irish Rose." And contempt for its own medium—the spoken drama.

Conrad Westervelt, the author, could not have written "Down to Miami" from inspiration or enthusiasm. He must have felt it was time for another "Abie" to make somebody another five million dollars. He must painfully have written the most obvious Gentile-Jewish mixup he could pretend to invent. He must have thought—and so must the producer and the actors—that this play would get the living hell beaten out of it by the critics, but that it would make money.

Somebody Forgot

There was just one little thing wrong with all this reasoning. Nobody remembered to make "Down to Miami" funny.

Robert Leonard plays the Jewish father. Herbert Heyes plays the Gentile father. Elaine Ellis is the Jewish girl who gets the Gentile war hero. Lyn Logan is the Gentile girl who must have got the Jewish war hero, but if she did she must have done it in the third act and I can't give you a first-hand report. Merle Maddern is a Gentile mother and Dora Weisman a Jewish one.

Ever since Miss Nichols' "Abie" became a hit—because it was funny—showmen are inclined to disregard journalistic opinions on this type of comedy. You may go and find out about "Down to Miami" yourself if you want to—but I can give you a little tip. I watched that part of the audience which was in front of me and only one person appeared to be having a good time. He was an elderly party and he must have been deaf.

NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE
September 12, 1944

Bad Night for Miami

By HOWARD BARNES

EVEN in a season which has established some fancy marks to shoot at, "Down to Miami" sets a new low. The new play at the Ambassador is a welter of witless clowning about racial problems. Having neither taste nor humor, it staggers through three acts of aimless business calculated to give both the players and spectators the jim-jams. Patterned vaguely on an Anne Nichols success of some seasons back, it might have been called "Rufus's Jewish Gloria." Under any title it would smell just as awful.

If it was Conrad Westervelt's intention to cement cordially between Jews and Gentiles with his whimsy he has wasted his time badly. Both races take an awful beating as a stuffed-shirt banker and a merchant of the chosen race oppose the marriage of their children of differing faiths. The company takes a shattering. For when it is not asked to deliver

"Down to Miami"—continued

insanities about racial prejudices it is involved in farcical nonsense which has all the liveliness of a paperweight. "Down to Miami" thuds through three acts, but it is really rough going.

The only glints of amusement come when Robert Leonard gets off an occasional explosive line as the Jewish poppa, as adamantly opposed to his daughter's marriage to a Christian boy, as the latter's family is to the

match. Dialect and gestures are all right for a burlesque show. They are ridiculous in the more serious moments of the piece. Herbert Hyes makes the Gentile father objectionable without being funny. Dora Weisman and Marie Maddern, as the respective wives and mothers, are swamped by bad lines and sorry situations.

It is the luckless task of Charles Lang and Elaine Ellis to play the romantic young-

sters. They are engaging enough, but the course of their love affair is far from that. Before the ending you may agree with the fathers' first feeling about their marriage. John Gould, Brian O'Mara and the others work hard but unrewardingly under very bad conditions. The production, if you care, has some fancy Miami sets by Stewart Chaney which might possibly be altered sometime to dress a genuine comedy. They only make pretentious the poppycock and pandemonium of "Down to Miami."

"The Day Will Come"

Play by Leo Birinski; staged by Lee Elmore; settings by Frederick Fox. Presented by Harry Green at the National Theatre, September 7, 1944.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
September 5, 1944

A Bad Evening With Hitler

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

In writing *The Day Will Come*, Mr. Birinski doubtless felt he had a very real message to impart; but it would be difficult to imagine a more muddled, inchoate and tedious evening in the theater. Didacticism is always a hindrance to drama, and *The Day Will Come* is as relentlessly didactic as anything could be; but there is much more wrong with it than that. Everything, in fact, is wrong with it. As playwriting, it is inconceivably crude and fumbling. As theater, it is all talk and no action, and very dull talk too, when it is not outright rant. It posits a fantastic situation, and develops it even more fantastically. Its very message misses fire; and to crown everything, the production is entirely inadequate.

Mr. Birinski has to tell of the Nazi invasion of a Russian village during the Autumn of 1941, and of a pious old Jew who remains behind after the natives have burned their homes and fled. Enter some German generals who are opposed to Hitler's idea of a Winter campaign in Russia. When they find old Avrum owns a centuries-old edition of Nostradamus, they decide to pawn him off on their superstitious Fuehrer as a prophet who sees disaster in a Winter campaign. All this, already punctuated by many wise speeches on Avrum's part, is but the prelude to a big scene between Avrum and Adolf, in which the unflinching old man hurls fire and brimstone at the persecutor of his people. Condemned to a firing squad, Avrum somehow eludes death—a symbol of the indestructibility of his race.

It is not hard to understand Harry Green's reasons for producing *The Day Will Come*. It speaks for his race, and it offered him one of those noble juicy roles that every actor dreams of. But actually it is a badly written part, and one that Green cannot bring off; he remains Harry Green, and is effective only where he can be humorous. As Hitler, Brandon Peters raves and carries on as well the Fuehrer may, but with no suggestion of skill. In a generally weak cast, Arthur Vinton gets some credibility into the role of one of the generals. But the play itself remains as incredible as it is inept.

NEW YORK POST
September 5, 1944

"The Day Will Come" Confronts Hitler With The Wandering Jew

By WILELLA WALDOFF

LEO BIRINSKI has written a play about what happens when Adolf Hitler meets an aged Russian who might, or might

THE CAST

Baranova	D. J. Thompson
Shura	James Dobson
Artamon	Bruce Halsey
Fyodor Semionitch	John Paul
Marpha	Jan Sherwood
Parasha	Camila Ashland
Nikita	John F. Hamilton
Moskko	Sterling Mace
Kolya	Ronnie Jacoby
Anushka	Lenore Thomas
Avrum Dovid	Harry Green
Karl	Frederick Coe
Franz	Richard Bolton
General Von Bruck	Arthur Vinton
Captain Birkenbach	Ronald Alexander
Sergeant	William Forrest
General Gensler	Stephen Roberts
General Ziemsen	Bernard Pate
General Von Hoff	William Pringle
Adolf Hitler	Brandon Peters

not, be the Wandering Jew. What he has to say in "The Day Will Come," produced last night at the National Theatre, is a simple parable of truth, wisdom and humor. It would be more effective shorn of its rhetorical trimmings and dramatic platitudes.

Mr. Birinski as a playwright is sometimes as garrulous and extravagant as Adolf Hitler himself. He devotes his entire first act to the evacuation of a Russian village in the path of the Nazi invasion, crowding the stage with synthetic peasants who rush around burning everything in sight and finally take to the swamps and guerrilla warfare.

Although a number of incipient plots are hatched before the evacuation, none of them ever comes to anything, since only one or two of the people involved are ever seen or heard from again. This over-elaborate and generally tedious introduction contributes little to the author's thesis beyond a stagey atmosphere and the superstition that old Avrum Dovid, left behind in the only unburned house in the village, is supposed to be the Wandering Jew himself. Nikita, an old neighbor not quite right in the head, is convinced of it.

Generals Versus Hitler

Avrum Dovid, who has survived a long series of pogroms and is inclined to regard the German invasion as a tiresome but inevitable interruption of his religious observance of the Sabbath, is not overly disturbed when his home becomes a German general's headquarters.

The High Command, at least in that particular sector, considers Hitler a nincompoop and a superstitious fool and apparently doesn't care who knows it. Intrigued by the aged Jew and his priceless book filled with the prophecies of Nostradamus, General Von Hoff conceives the notion of introducing him to Hitler as the Wandering Jew, who will then proceed to scare Der Fuehrer out of continuing the Winter Campaign.

After all this preparation, "The Day Will Come" finally gets around to its big scene, the meeting between Hitler and the Jew. Hitler is presented by Brandon Peters as a stage version of popular cartoons of Der Fuehrer, who sounds like any one of his radio broadcasts. Avrum Dovid, in his quieter way, is

of the situation and resigned to his fate, but he warns the ranting Fuehrer that he will never be able to exterminate the Jew. And of course he can't, not even before a firing squad.

Harry Green as the Jew

Mr. Birinski has an idea here that ought to be far more effective in the theatre than it is. He is not altogether happy in his mixture of realistic drama, farce and allegory, and the production seems equally ponderous and confused at times, a lowering of the lights generally serving as the signal for the allegorical mood. Harry Green as the Jew is quietly impressive in his finer speeches, more of an old-time vaudeville comedian when the author permits him to go-gay.

"The Day Will Come" is a play that has some meat in it, but like so many dishes these days, is liberally padded with fat and flavorless filler. The meaty parts tickle the palate. The rest is just so much sawdust.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
September 5, 1944

In 'The Day Will Come' Hitler and The Wandering Jew Talk It Out

By JOHN CHAPMAN

IN Show business it is assumed that every clown wants to play Hamlet. There are no records of any great tragedian yearning to be an Ed Wynn or a Joe Cook, even though this is a high purpose for any man; but the funny chap always yearns to reveal the depth of his soul by showing his worth in straight drama. Last night at the National Theatre Harry Green, a Yiddish comedian, became the immortal Wandering Jew and confronted Adolf Hitler himself.

It is an earnest, careful, engaging performance in a parable called "The Day Will Come." As a play it is not so much, for Leo Birinski's writing tends to diffuse itself, but as a source of personal satisfaction to Harry Green it is excellent. In the garb and white whiskers of an aged Hebrew he makes his point. He is better than a gag man. So, too, was another comedian, George Jessel, in a delightful play about the biblical Joseph a number of years ago.

One Jew Is Left

In "The Day Will Come" the Germans are on their way to Moscow and the Russians in their path are burning their own homes and taking to the swamps. In one village, by an oversight, are left one house and one old Jew—a Jew who, according to a crackpot neighbor, was alive at the time of Christ.

This old fellow, being very simple, takes war and fire and invasion with philosophical calm. When his German officers move into his house he takes them with calm, too—and thereby puzzles them mightily.

It requires quite a bit of arbitrary, theatrical maneuvering to arrange a meeting between the ancient one and Hitler, and here

is the weakness of the drama. It is discovered that the Jew possesses an original volume of the prophecies of Nostradamus. Some Junker generals, feeling that Hitler's Winter campaign toward Moscow is a military mistake, believe that the superstitious Fuehrer can be made to change his mind if the Jew will show him in Nostradamus' work that the campaign will bring disaster.

A Meeting—at Last

This, as I say, is a lot of horsing-around to arrive at something one has been waiting for all evening—the meeting between the gentle Hebrew and the lunatic Jew-killer. But when the meeting finally takes place it is holding.

Brandon Peters plays Hitler intelligently. The gestures are those one remembers from the newsreels; the changes from hysterics to diabolical calm are those we have read about. Against him, with his gentle resignation, Green achieves a kind of nobility.

"Why do you hate us?" the Jew asks Hitler. "Because," shouts the Fuehrer, "you brought about Christianity." The play makes Hitler even more anti-Christian than he is anti-Jew.

At the end the old fellow is shot by a firing squad—but he won't die. And Hitler is left to live out his few remaining years of torture.

I don't think "The Day Will Come" will be a success because its first two acts are merely time-fillers leading up to a one-act drama. But the honesty of its purpose must be saluted, and so must the ambition of Mr. Green.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

September 8, 1944

'The Day Will Come' At National Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

ONCE again, in this wonderful wacky world of ours, Adolf Hitler has not been content to let well enough alone. These nights, at the National Theatre, "The Day Will Come" goes smoothly, perhaps successfully, on its humanitarian way. For two out of three acts Leo Birnisky's comedy-about-a-tragedy is a timely, far from unbecoming vehicle for the peculiar talents of Harry Green, its producer and its star.

Then in pops Der Fuehrer and out pop the piece's several virtues, including credibility. Even if Brandon Peters were Adolf Hitler, himself, in person, and a much more convincing picture, you couldn't, you wouldn't, believe in him.

I couldn't and wouldn't at any rate. Suppose Adolf Hitler does rave. Suppose Adolf Hitler is a ham Napoleon. Suppose Adolf Hitler is twice as corny in real life as Brandon Peters is upon the National Theatre's stage. Admitting, rather than supposing, that all these minus things are true, Der Fuehrer is no more than a figure of fun, a laughing stock, as mimicked good and loud in West 41st St.

And, say what you want to say and try to get it printed, Adolf Hitler is no figure of fun, no laughing stock, in this or any other land, in this or any other language.

Odd Triangle

They do say, the professionals, that every play must have its triangle. The triangle of "The Day Will Come" is composed of The Wandering Jew, Nostradamus and Adolf Hitler. The Wandering Jew is a fine old fellow, a fabulous, bearded patriarch who lives, for the time being, in a Russia isba. Maybe he really is the Ahasuerus of ballad and belief, as who mocked the Son of Man as He dragged His cross along the road to Calvary.

At the National, you never really know. Not even at the very end when, after having been shot down in cold blood by a Nazi firing squad, he reappears miraculously out of the furthest snowstorm which has descended upon the war-torn land.

Nostradamus is represented by a rare old

first edition of his own prophecies, a treasured tome hidden in a chamber of the isba in which The Wandering Jew resides, replete with notations in the patriarch's own Hebraic scrawl. Adolf Hitler has come to save the Jews, it says, not to destroy them. To save them by bringing them back to their ancient religion and their proud world-old customs. Jews must die so that Jewry may live! Thus speaks Avruhn Dovid.

Yes and No

Whatever I, or anybody else, write about this curious and controversial comic-tragedy—or tragic-comedy, if you will—is almost certain to offend. If I praise it, there are those who will sincerely call me dastard. If I do not praise it, there are those who will repeat the accusation. And quite as sincerely! So I'll fall back on the truth and neither praise nor not praise it. Frankly, it gives me no more pleasure than it gives me pain.

That is to say, it leaves me exactly where it found me. But I'll come right out and confess that I like "The Day Will Come" before Adolf Hitler arrives upon the scene. After that, Adolf Hitler spoils Playwright Birnisky's evening for me.

As long as Harry Green as The Wandering Jew is the central figure in the National Theatre's onstage picture, Broadway's new offering is humorous and tender and true, the touching portrait of a Hebrew household holding itself honorably intact against a background of hate, horror and holocaust. But as soon as Brandon Peters as Adolf Hitler takes over, "The Day Will Come" explodes. Comedy, tragedy, or good Red melodrama, it explodes right in Der Fuehrer's face.

NEW YORK TIMES

September 8, 1944

The Wandering Jew

By LEWIS NICHOLS

THE legend of the Wandering Jew and the far-from-legend that is Hitler form the chief ingredients of "The Day Will Come," which opened last evening at the National. As a play it is confused, a mixture of would-be realism and fantasy, and neither successful. It is possible that an imaginative drama could be built on the subject that has inspired Leo Birnisky, but it is definite that he has not done so. Much of the acting and the direction do not add to the evening, for the playing somewhat often jumps off the rails of plausibility to the bumpy roadbed of caricature. "The Day Will Come" is not an exciting one, as days come off Times Square.

Mr. Birnisky starts with realism. The scene is Russia, where a village lies in the path of the Nazi army. The men go off to fight the war from the swamps, the women flee, the only person who remains is a patriarch who, the villagers declare, is the Wandering Jew. Presently the German general takes over the house, and the generals, against the winter campaign, persuade the Jew to tell Hitler, on an old copy of the prophecies of Nostradamus, that he should not seek Moscow by winter. Hitler and the Jew then have a discussion of the Jewish faith, the Christian faith, the Nazi ideal; and at the end the old man has survived a firing squad and Hitler is looking out at the snow falling between himself and Moscow.

"The Day Will Come" is rather heavily studded with implausibilities. Hitler comes to the home of the Wandering Jew unguarded, as though paying an afternoon call, which if news reports are to be believed does not seem likely. The generals lure Hitler to the house with a promise of Nostradamus' complete prophecies; an audience may feel that the real Wandering Jew of legend would not need Nostradamus. Although the last, prophetic act is confused, the prophecies seem to be that the Nazis will not reach Moscow; history now agrees with that, but in the play the Russian armies could have stood a bit more credit. Further, the play concerns itself mainly with the fight of the Jews against

Hitler; that battle is not limited to a religious faith.

Harry Green is the Wandering Jew, playing the part with obvious sincerity if without much power. To Brandon Peters has fallen the lot of Hitler. Portraying that figure on the stage constitutes a day's work, and Mr. Peters does not spare himself. His Hitler is a mad, raging maniac—but some of the gestures and the ranting go on a little far and become a bit like Willie Howard. Arthur Vinton has the part of a German general who never has approved of the Russian campaign and conspires to have the Wandering Jew talk Hitler out of it. The portraits of most of the Germans are orthodox; they click their heels—and stab one another in the back. Frederick Fox has designed a nice room.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM

September 8, 1944

The Day Will Come Lacks Dramatic Merit

By BURTON ROSCOE

LEO BIRINSKI'S "The Day Will Come," which Harry Green presented (with a juicy role for himself) at the National last night, is, I am afraid, a belated act of noble faith and sentiment rather than a meritorious drama, or indeed an acceptable piece of theatrics. Clothed in the warm robes of an essay form, Mr. Birnisky's message might well engender salutary thought and worthy action; but exposed, in the thin wrappings of melodrama, to the paper snow and the wind-machine howls of the theater, its spirit, as well as its body, is at rather pathetic disadvantage.

Nothing happens until the last act except to establish Mr. Green as a Russian patriarch against a background of action that seems to have been appropriated, a bit here and a bit there, from The Russian People and half a dozen other such failures. And in the last act Adolf Hitler and the Jewish patriarch are brought together in order that the author, in the person of the patriarch, may say something that proved to be as surprising to the audience as it was to the Hitler of the play.

Hitler as a Benefactor

The patriarch tells Hitler that he is the greatest benefactor the Jews have had since the days of the prophets. After this idea has been allowed to astound everybody Mr. Birnisky elaborates upon his paradoxical contention by saying that Hitler is the great benefactor of the Jews because his insane slaughter of defenseless members of the race has "liberated the Jews from the idea of their Jewishness" and has united them with all the rest of humane mankind in a determination to wipe Hitlerism and the Germanic idea of racial superiority from the face of the earth.

Not Deeply Moving

This whole scene, which should have been deeply moving, wasn't. The reason is not far to seek. Hitler is a madman's caricature of a man in his own person. Therefore, any attempt by an actor to characterize or caricature him on the stage is bound to seem inept, amateurish and a poor likeness—the mustache but nothing else, none of the paranoiac essence of that human monstrosity.

Brandon Peters did as well as he could in the thankless role, but he was licked by it from the start.

The play starts with the exodus of Russian peasants and villagers from a terrain that is to be razed under the scorched-earth policy of Stalin to impede the march of the Germans toward Moscow. While the patriarch's atheistic Communist grandson and family prepare to leave and burn their house, he declines to let the war interfere with his Sabbath observances and remains in the house, which he refuses to burn because it is his, too, and is found there by the Germans, who make it staff headquarters. The wild tale of a demented peasant that the patriarch is the Wandering Jew, together with the discovery that the patriarch is an authority on the cabalistic

"The Day Will Come"—continued

rhymes of Nostradamus, prompts a general (who was against the Russian campaign) to use the patriarch to try to convince Hitler (who believes in the occult) that the Russian campaign is a mistake. Hence the confrontation of Hitler and the patriarch, at the end of which Hitler watches the patriarch being executed, only to see him walk into the house a few minutes later—an apparition that drives Hitler stark mad.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE

September 3, 1944

Needs Daylight

By HOWARD BARNES

REARLISM and fantasy clash with resounding dissonance in "The Day Will Come." This present day parable about the wandering Jew would have you believe that he meets Hitler in a Russian village and scares him out of his wits with predictions of his ultimate defeat. The idea might possibly have been woven into a striking dramatic crazyquilt. As it has been conceived and executed at the National, it is merely a jumbled mess of symbolism, mysticism and obvious factual documentation.

There is no missing the essential sincerity of the theme. Leo Birinski writes with considerable passion at times, particularly when he has an ancient rabbi confronting members of the German general staff and then der Fuehrer himself. Unfortunately, he becomes so confused in his exposition that he tosses a whole village population away after one act and has to bring in Nostradamus to bolster up his perfectly good contention that persecution frequently makes men stronger. Since the Germans are still marching on Moscow supposedly at the ending, leaving Hitler beating his breast and the rabbi hiding in the woods, it is, to say the least, somewhat confusing.

The play would have been bad enough as it stood on paper. It is not bettered in the performance. Harry Green, in addition to sponsoring the work, puts on some Santa Claus whiskers and wanders all over the stage of the National. Dialectical horseplay

has not equipped him well for the part of the Jewish patriarch. There is neither depth nor quality to most of his performance and there are moments when you are likely to expect the whole show to explode into burlesque.

This is particularly true when he is joined by Brandon Peters in the thankless role of Hitler. Together they succeed in blunting what little edge of fantasy is left in "The Day Will Come" after a straggling preamble. Russian patriots are on stage briefly. The German generals are played emphatically by Arthur Vinton, Stephen Roberts, Bernard Pate and William Pringle. Good acting is as fugitive as good writing at the National. "The Day Will Come" is a stage jigsaw puzzle put together all wrong.

NEW YORK SUN

September 5, 1944

'The Day Will Come,' Artificial Play, Brings Hitler to Stage of National

By WARD MOREHOUSE

"THE DAY WILL COME," which has been a long time on the way, finally reached the New York stage last night, via Harry Green's presentation at the National, and it brought along the character of Adolf Hitler, pictured as the world has known him to be—raving, demoniacal, morose, harassed, self-exalted.

It's a wordy, unstable, but occasionally interesting, play that Leo Birinski has written and in which Hitler is shown in conflict with the Wandering Jew. The Fuehrer comes off the loser.

The Jew of Mr. Birinski's drama is aged and ageless. He is all-seeing and all-perceiving. He is given to prayer and is possessed of Nostradamus powers. The past, as well as the future, unfolds before him. He talks of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow as if it happened only the other afternoon. He causes a group of Prussian generals to stand

in awe of him and an arrogant Hitler to cringe in terror.

The locale of "The Day Will Come" is a Russian village, in the path of the German advance early in the Russian campaign. The village is ordered burned and evacuated and the population flees to the swamps, but the venerable Avrum David, the Jewish patriarch, to whom the peasants ascribe supernatural powers, remains.

The Prussian generals who come along are resentful of the rise and the authority of the Fuehrer; they accept the old man as the Wandering Jew and seek to use him and his prophetic powers to dissuade Hitler not to make the winter's march on Moscow. The Fuehrer comes to the village, discovers the conspiracy, orders the death of a general and confronts the Jew. Hitler is told that the Moscow drive will not bring on his death; that he will live to suffer some of the untold agonies that he has brought upon the Jews and upon the world.

In seeing such a play and knowing that the character of Hitler is to appear you are waiting for such an appearance all the way. It doesn't come until the third act, which ends in fantasy and leaves Hitler ranting at the finish. The final act is disappointing, bringing a let-down after a second act that had some promise and excitement.

Harry Green, besides producing this Birinski play, has quite an evening as its principal actor, playing the role of the Jew who foresees and forewarns and who is given immortality at the end. I thought that he does extraordinarily well with his characterization, but felt that there is an absence of the great dignity in his performance that the part demands.

Brandon Peters plays Hitler straight and rather gets away with a difficult job. He looks the part of the Fuehrer and pictures him as a violent and bombastic egomaniac. Also, as a creature of fright and terror. Nazi officers are generally well played on the New York stage and Arthur Vinton's General Von Bruck is particularly good, as is the General Von Hoff of William Fringa. Lee Elmore has given considerable vitality to the direction and there is an excellent setting, a Russian interior, by Frederick Fox.

"The Day Will Come" has some strong scenes but it is given to rambling, it is uncertain for much of the way, and definitely on the artificial side. I doubt its chances for a run at the National.

"Last Stop"

Play by Irving Kaye Davis; staged by Irwin Piscator; settings by Sam Leve. Presented by Victor Hugo-Vidal at the Barrymore Theatre, September 5, 1944.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

September 4, 1944

'Last Stop'—All Out, and Boy, Does It Feel Good to Get Out!

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"LAST STOP," a melodrama by Irving Kaye Davis, is enough to make your flesh crawl—right out of the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

A wearisome business about some old ladies in an old ladies' home. It is one of the most untheatrical pieces of dramaturgy since I wrote my first and last play when I was 12 years old. Almost everything of interest either happens offstage or is reported at length to have happened 40 or 50 years ago. The talk which does occur upon the stage must be heard to be disbelieved.

Some of it can't even be heard. Catharine Doucet, an actress of excellent repute, last night had to pitch her futuristic tones against the hum of a ventilating system and the system won. This didn't heighten the interest.

THE CAST

Mrs. Shappard	Frederica Goings
Mrs. Chubb	Enid Markey
Rev. Mr. Cummings	William Hughes
Mrs. Manning	Mary Gidea
Mrs. Hollister	Nell Harrison
Mrs. Miller	Daisy Belmore
Mrs. Smith	Laurie McVicker
Mrs. Dingman	Mary Perry
Mrs. Fitzpatrick	Grace Valentine
Mrs. Baldwin	Augusta French
Mrs. Mabledoor	Eda Heineman
Walter	Seth Arnold
Catherine Chandler	Catharine Doucet
Mr. Cook	Gregory Robins
Mrs. Anna Haines	Minnie Dupree
Howard Haines, her son	Raymond Bailey
Isabel Haines, her daughter-in-law	Mavis Freeman
Mary Stevens, her daughter	Effie Afton
Mr. White	Robert Stewart
State Trooper	Clark Poth
Reporter	Alan Brock

because Miss Doucet is the villain—a society dame who runs this crozier rookery and feeds the poor old things nothing but hamburger and mashed potatoes.

I won't saddle you with the plot because

that's Mr. Davis' baby, and he is stuck with it. His idea is all right—to make a drama about old ladies and not have a love story or a kid in it. His cast would be all right, too, if it had a chance, for it includes such players of long good standing as Enid Markey, Daisy Belmore, Eda Heineman, Minnie Dupree and Grace Valentine.

But Mr. Davis apparently has no ear for the spoken word and little instinct for keeping things moving behind footlights, and Irwin Piscator's direction is about as definite as "how far is up?"

NEW YORK TIMES

September 4, 1944

The Ladies

By LEWIS NICHOLS

AS determined a little horror as has drifted to Broadway in quite a time bobbed up at the Barrymore last evening under the perhaps prophetic name of "Last Stop." It concerns the residents of an old ladies' home. Scratching into their lives for a macabre sort of comedy, which alter-

naïve with maudlin sentimentality, it succeeds in making very little sense. Poorly written and badly directed, it has the further lack of grace to involve in its playing parts some nice names in the theatre. Such people as Daisy Belmore, Enid Markey, Eda Helman, Seth Arnold, Minnie Dupree, all are forced to act what must seem like caricatures of roles that can be taken on a stage.

Mr. Davis' play, confused enough on its own, was rendered completely hopeless last evening by a long explanatory passage being delivered inaudibly. From hints thrown out from time to time, however, it seemed to involve a rich woman, who runs the old ladies' home, and a murder back in 1899. When the woman wishes to move the home, the residents go on strike, win the battle, solve the murder and no doubt live happily thereafter. The one role that can be played at all is played very well by Grace Valentine; the rest are whipped before they start.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM
September 6, 1944

Mildew and Old Lace

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

MR. IRVING KAYE DAVIS' latest work is not one to start a reviewer's pen racing across the page. It leaves you, rather, dazed and incredulous; for while terribly bad plays are nothing to be startled at on Broadway, terribly bad ones as passe as high button shoes must be at least a little bit of a mystery. Passing up for what reasons *Last Stop* was written, one must still wonder on what grounds it was produced. But as Dr. Johnson once said to Boswell when his disciple was nonplussed, "Sir, you may wonder."

Mr. Davis has pitched, for his subject-matter, on an old ladies' home; and conceivably, in sensitive hands, the pathos and comedy of such an institution could have its theatrical virtues. But Mr. Davis, besides gazing at the pathos with a bucket of suds and at the comedy with an old joke book, has tossed in a plot of the *Way Down East* era. It's a mere starter that the villainous rich lady of the town sells the Home over its aged inmates' heads. For the Home belongs by rights to one of the inmates, whom the rich lady robbed of it in her youth. There's even a half-witted old gardener to the tale, who finally lays bare this ancient skulduggery; and it is gratifying to report that the viper does a frightened fade out and the Old Home gets a new birth of freedom.

The production has its oddities, too. Mr. Piscator has directed it rather monumentally at times, grouping the ladies as for a pageant; and as the villainess, Catharine Doucet gives a peculiar but fascinating performance, not letting a good many of her words stray across the footlights.

NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE
September 6, 1944

Well Named

By HOWARD BARNES

THE author of "Last Stop" has practically put a full stop to the new season. His contemplation of fluttering crones in an Old Ladies' Home is so silly and soporific that it defeats every effort of an agreeable company to bring it to stage life. The Ethel Barrymore offering is neither farcical fun nor melodramatic nonsense. Trying to be both, it bogs down in as dreary stretches of dramatic exposition as it has been this reviewer's ill fate to observe for some time.

The idea of the show, if one may be permitted to hazard an opinion on that point, seems to be that a bunch of elderly women can defeat the most nefarious schemes of an alleged lady beautiful. My money was on the inmates of the institution right through

two painfully long acts, but there was no pay-off in the way of entertainment. The fact is that Irving Kaye Davis has written an extremely shoddy piece and his collaborators on the project have merely made it worse by pretentious flourishes.

There is staging, for example, by Irwin Piscator, which keeps the company milling around the stage with no more than wisps of eloquence or brilliance to be found in the script. There is a nice setting by Sam Leve and properly antique costumes for the gentlewomen nearing the end of the line. Since nothing of any possible consequence happens to the old ladies en route, it becomes as dead a theatrical ride as you will often experience.

If there is any dubious excuse for this Victor Hugo-Vidal production it is the bits of illusion which are plucked from a vacuum by some expert veteran actresses. Minnie Dupree is sometimes sympathetic as the old lady who organizes a strike and saves the home for its patiently expiring inhabitants. Catharine Doucet is arrogant, if implausible, as the harridan who stole the home in the first place. Grace Valentine, Enid Markey and Eda Helman create a proper mood for pathos and Seth Arnold works overtime to give the piece a sinister underlining which just isn't there. There is little there in the way of a play in "Last Stop."

NEW YORK SUN
September 6, 1944

"Last Stop," Presented at the Barrymore, Dreary Play of an Old Ladies' Home

By WARD MOREHOUSE

IRVING KAYE DAVIS, a fellow with a lot of enthusiasm for the theater, has taken another whirl at playwrighting in "Last Stop," and has fashioned a piece that won't bring any excitement to the theatrical season. He has written a dreary and dawdling play of life among old ladies in retirement.

Mr. Davis's characters, in the majority, are the infirm and the aged—several of them are right aptly played—and his play was brought into the Mansfield last night by Victor Hugo-Vidal. For I fear the worst.

In "Last Stop" the locale is an old ladies' home and one that the rich, venomous and altogether villainous Mrs. Chandler is about to sell for reconstruction as a night club. It's her intention to move the happy inmates into less desirable quarters down by the glue factory. But the ladies are stirred into rebellion by the soft-spoken Mrs. Haines, newly arrived. Forty-five years before the place had belonged to her father, who was robbed and murdered on the day of the mortgage foreclosure. So the evil Mrs. Chandler doesn't get away with ousting the girls. There is a confession of murder, in which she is implicated, the home is restored to Mrs. Haines, villainy is crushed, and virtue is triumphant.

There are melodramatics in "Last Stop" of the Hal Reid school. There are touches of another Davis, given name Owen, in the days when he was turning out two and three thrillers a week. There are also effective moments here and there, brought out by the characterizations. One of the quieter and better scenes is that in which Mrs. Haines, unwanted by her children, is delivered to the home for the aged.

Minnie Dupree, of long and distinguished service to the theater, brings sympathy and restrained playing to the role of Mrs. Haines. Catharine Doucet, not generally given to villainy in her plays, didn't seem particularly at ease and was often quite inaudible as the malevolent Mrs. Chandler, all intent on selling out to the boys from the city. Enid Markey gets spirit and fun into the character of Mrs. Chubb and Grace Valentine, once of the hilarity of "Lombardi, Ltd.," is quite vigorous as the outspoken Mrs. Fitzpatrick.

"Last Stop," staged by Irwin Piscator, is a

mingling of character comedy and old-fashioned melodrama. It is a drowsy play, generally as infirm as the character it depicts. All of which won't discourage Irving Kaye Davis. He will probably be ready with another play by day after tomorrow.

NEW YORK POST
September 6, 1944

"Last Stop"—Comedy and Old-Style Melodrama in an Old Ladies' Home

By WILLELLA WALDORF

AN old ladies' home might conceivably be the setting of a very moving play, but Irving Kaye Davis' "Last Stop," produced last night at the Barrymore Theatre, soon dissipates the appealing quality inherent in its background and becomes a melodramatic comedy so naively dated in style that Irving Kaye Davis might easily be a pseudonym for Dion Boucicault.

It isn't, of course, Mr. Davis is not reviving an old Boucicault. He merely reminds you of him now and then. Not that Boucicault would have been quite so tedious. Had "Last Stop" been genuine Boucicault, the big fire scene certainly would never have transpired off-stage. It would have gone on before our eyes, rendered violently realistic by means of red lights and flickering tissue paper.

Mr. Davis goes to a good deal of trouble to establish his background. He gathers together a number of old ladies who have no other place to go and makes them foolish and coy, disabled and pathetic, or forthright and rebellious, and introduces into their midst Mrs. Haines, whose grown son and daughter have no room for her at their respective homes.

Enter the Plot

Mrs. Haines comes to the Chandler Home because her father owned the place before Catherine Chandler did, and she has a sentimental attachment for it. At this point Mr. Davis' melodramatic plot pokes its head into the institutional parlor and starts making faces at the audience.

It seems Mrs. Chandler doesn't really own the place at all. Mrs. Haines does! The details were not as clear last night as they might have been since this reporter, for once, managed to catch only about half of what Catharine Doucet was saying. Miss Doucet plays the insufferable Chandler woman, and has a lot of the expedition to get over the footlights.

Anyhow, old Walter, the hired man who's got quite right in the head, obviously knows plenty. If he talked—well, Catherine Chandler sees to it that he doesn't talk, until the last scene when the whole dastardly history comes gushing forth just in time to save the old ladies from being moved to a detestable house in another part of town.

Catherine Chandler, the snake, is selling the house Mrs. Haines really owned to a fellow from New York who proposes to turn it into a road house! When fire mysteriously breaks out in the other house, she even tries to get rid of Mrs. Haines by having her arrested for arson. Oh, Catherine Chandler is a real dyed-in-the-wool villainess, a fiend in Bergdorf-Goodman clothing.

Bouts of Comedy

While his plot simmers—and it stays on the back of the stove for a long time, emitting a dank, musty smell—Mr. Davis lets some of the old ladies indulge in bouts of wisecracking. The end-men of this part of the entertainment, Grace Valentine and Enid Markey, managed to be quite funny now and then, especially Miss Valentine, who had the best part in the whole play and knew it.

Minnie Dupree as Mrs. Haines upheld the right with the correct amount of hand-trembling, lipshaking and gentle determination to see things through, and Seth Arnold was good as the hired man. Miss Doucet as the horrendous Chandler female was so mannered and unreal that she was even harder

"Last Stop"—continued

to believe that the author presumably intended. The scenic and costume designers supplied countless details to make things seem just as homey as an old ladies' home ought to be, and Erwin Piscator directed with affectionate, if somewhat over-deliberate, regard for the background and its people.

An item that worried us unduly on leaving the theatre was how Mrs. Haines fancied she was going to finance the home—even to installing an elevator—just because she had suddenly become its owner. As we understood it, all she had to go on was \$1,000 found in an old fur coat left by a former inmate, now deceased.

It might be a good idea just before the final curtain to take up a collection for maintenance from the audience. People who go for this play are going to love it so much they'll probably be willing to hand over their hard-earned savings to keep the old ladies happy and contented, without stopping to remember they're all members of Equity.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM

September 4, 1934

Last Stop Hard to Judge on Its First Performance

By BURTON RASCOE

EVEN if everything had gone smoothly last night, it is doubtful if many in the audience would say that *Last Stop* (a play about 10 pathetic inmates of an old ladies' home), which opened at the Ethel Barrymore Theater, has a ghost of a chance on Broadway; but two things occurred which made it pretty difficult to judge the play on its merits.

In the first place, whether through excessive nervousness or through too long habituation to the microphone and the slip-by-slip technique of acting in the movies, Catharine Doucet, upon whose role so much of the action of the play depends, let the show down so badly that all the valiant work of such able stage veterans as Minnie Dupree, Enid Markey and Grace Valentine couldn't shore it up. Much of the time, from the third row, I couldn't hear a word Miss Doucet said; and then, when I did, I was sorry, so strained, unnatural (even at times ridiculous) was her projection.

In the second place, the blackout (or rather its aftermath) ruined a whole scene in the last act, at a rather crucial moment in the development of the story. The audience had not been permitted to leave the theater during the one intermission because of the air-raid drill. The blackout was on our minds, therefore, when Miss Doucet sat down to call a number on the telephone. A siren was heard, and when Miss Doucet said she couldn't hear very well because of the noise, people thought she was ad libbing to gain time until the air-raid signals should die down. They laughed heartily. But Miss Doucet wasn't ad

libbing; she was speaking lines of the play. The noises weren't from outside; they were backstage alarms to indicate a fire which Miss Doucet (in the play) had criminally set to her own property in order falsely to accuse Miss Dupree. The more Miss Doucet talked about the fire (she was establishing an alibi for herself) the more people giggled until the whole point of the scene was lost.

But I suspect the real catastrophe was the error of the author, Irving Kaye Davis, in supposing that the theme of his play is essentially funny. It isn't; it is tragic and pathetic, even in its bare outlines. For his old ladies are not only all alone in the world, some of them without kin and some with children and grandchildren who don't want them around, but are starved and swindled, bullied and humiliated by a vicious and avaricious woman, who holds by theft and fraud the very house they live in.

Somehow there seems to be the basis of a fine tragic play there. But Mr. Davis has treated it throughout in an airy, makeshift manner, partly in a comic vein and partly in a melodramatic vein, with none of the elements fused into a credible story. The play is not altogether, uninteresting, even as it stands, for the Misses Dupree, Markey and Valentine, in especial, give some characterizations that are very fine, in spite of lines that aren't always felicitous. Miss Valentine delighted us with her projection of a vigorous and forthright Irishwoman with no nonsense about her, and the Misses Dupree and Markey were very endearing.

Indeed, had these three and the Misses Belmore, Going, McVicker, Glides, Harrison, Perry, French and Heineman been permitted to shift for themselves, with an assist from Seth Arnold, I believe we should all have found the evening more to our taste than it was. The others were handicapped by mechanical dialogue, entrances and exits, and Miss Doucet was handicapped by stage fright and too long a stay in the movies.

NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

September 6, 1934

'Last Stop' Opens At the Barrymore

By ROBERT GARLAND

TWO entirely different plays came last night to the Ethel Barrymore Theatre. Each is called "Last Stop." Each is by Irving Kaye Davis. The first play has to do with an Old Ladies' Home and the faded females who take up the rooms therein, one of whom is dead and the rest of whom are dying. The second play has to do with an unsolved killing, in which is involved a long lost fortune.

By the time the two are finally brought together, the combination of "Last Stop" number one and "Last Stop" number two has as

good as managed to live down to its title.

This two-plays-in-one is by If-At-First-You-Don't-Succeed Davis, husband of Elsa Shelley, whose "Pick-Up Girl" is getting along quite nicely a block away in the 48th Street Theatre. I bring this up because it is in me to wish that husband and wife had gotten together on the competition of the two "Last Stops," pulling the plots together, stepping up the dialogue, stepping down the ancients.

But if wishes were writing, Mr. Davis would have written himself a good play and I, for one, would have praised it.

Talk! Talk! Talk!

Like drama critics and other has-beens, old ladies talk too much. Especially Mr. Davis's. At the Ethel Barrymore, old Mrs. Sheppard, old Mrs. Chubb, old Mrs. Manning, old Mrs. Hollister, old Mrs. Miller, old Mrs. Smith, old Mrs. Dingman, old Mrs. Baldwin and old Mrs. Fitzpatrick talk their dear old tiresome heads off, queaking—there must be such a word!—and queaking dismally as they do so.

Once in a while, old Mrs. Fitzpatrick snags out of it, lighting a cigaret, tossing a four letter word and generally brightening up the corner where she is. But not for long!

If the first play called "Last Stop" is for the most part dismal, the second play called "Last Stop" is downright preposterous, a ten-twenty-thirty melodrama that would be funny without being vulgar anywhere but in an Old Ladies' Home. But there it is, with good being rewarded, evil being punished and that nasty old Catherine Chandler's house burning down. A rich robber of cadavers, this witch-like Mrs. C.

Even so, I like her. For it is she who, at long last, brings the two "Last Stops" together. And to an end!

Kate's a Character

It's the Catharine Doucet I cherish who deals with that nasty old Catherine Chandler. If you didn't see and admire Miss Doucet in "The Royal Family" or "The Perfect Alibi," you saw and admired her in "Topas" or "As Husbands Go." Frankly, I'm not quite sure what kind of a person she imagines that nasty old Catherine Chandler to be. But neither is the playwright! So, having left Catherine Chandler in the player's hands, Miss Doucet creates herself a character.

Minnie Dupree, with two full columns in "Who's Who in the Theatre" behind her, is active but inaudible as dear old Mrs. Haines, the lady who unveils the villainess and comes into a fortune.

Seth Arnold again plays Seth Arnold, this time under the single name of Walter. Grace Valentine makes the most of Mrs. Fitzpatrick's minor misdeeds. The setting, by Sam Leve, fails to fit the dialogue. The direction, by Irwin Piscator, is lackadaisical. And, taking it as it comes—which is as slow as a cross-town trolley—Victor Hugo-Vidal's first Broadway production is a fearful little earful.

I'm very much afraid that the last stop of the "Last Stop" will be in West 46th Street, up on the stage of the Ethel Barrymore Theatre.

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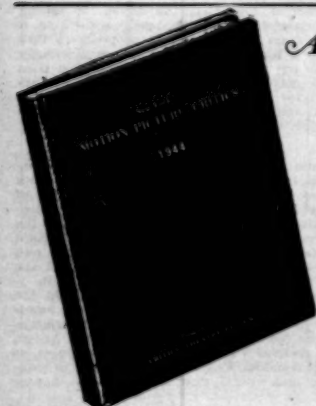
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New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1944

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